

A Nest of My Own

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My thoughts were moving faster than my feet, as I charged up the trail in the woods just above my house. The beauty of the early June evening, permeated with the scent of pungent pines almost escaped me as I pondered my situation. Where will I move, now that the owners are selling my rental? How can I ever find another place like this—a house that truly feels like home? Should I try to stay in northern California or go back to Oregon to live near my aging parents? I had returned to my most recent hometown of Quincy, California, after losing my job in Oregon nine months earlier in a companywide layoff.

The thought of moving again sent shudders through me as I pictured myself repacking my hundreds of beloved books—everything from old hymnals to cookbooks—and my collection of white ironstone dishes. After weeks of unpacking last fall, I had prayed that God would spare me from the ordeal of moving again on my own.

On my own. That phrase had described my life for the past four years, the result of an event totally unexpected. When my marriage of nearly thirty years ended in divorce, I was almost as shocked as my family and friends. My move to Oregon followed, and I had been living with the reality of being on my own ever since. Will I ever get used to doing it all?

The responsibilities my husband and I had shared were based on the traditional roles of our childhood homes. He took care of the vehicles and yards, and I managed all the household chores like cooking, cleaning, and laundry. He loved numbers and I loved words, so he handled all the financial and business dealings, while I tended to our correspondence.

Now the domain of duties belonged to me alone. And, truthfully, I was beyond weary of doing it all. That's why the prospect of owning a home solo didn't sing blessing to me; instead it bellowed burden. While I missed the benefits of being a homeowner, I liked the fact that I could call my landlord about the leaky pipe and fickle furnace—and anything else that went awry. Especially since pretty much everything that could go wrong did, with my rentals in both Oregon and California.

At least I loved my place here in Quincy. With its hardwood floors and archways, two fireplaces, and a flower-filled yard with brickwork and decks, this home offered a haven to my heart. Originally my landlords' dwelling, it exuded charm inside and out. Everyone who saw it exclaimed over its loveliness, often ending with, "It's perfect for you!"

I agreed. The thought of leaving this personal paradise saddened me, but I had no choice. Where should I go, God? My thoughts and prayers jumbled together as I continued up the trail. I lifted my head just enough to catch a glimpse of something to my left. What was that?

My feet and thoughts halted in unison when I spied a small bird's nest amid the spring-green leaves of a maple sapling. I gently lowered a pencil-thin branch to peer inside, already thinking what a perfect addition this nest would make for my collection. I liked displaying the pocket-sized homes of my feathered friends and tucking them into my Christmas tree.

My eyes confirmed what I had already concluded: the nest was empty. I marveled at how it had been built so low and close to the hiking path. I tried to dislodge the amazing entwining of everything from pine needles to feathers, but the nest refused to relocate into my eager hands. I leaned closer and saw that it was firmly secured by strong fibers that were tightly wound around three points on the forked branch. How did the mother bird do that? Not wanting to damage the nest, I vowed to come back another day with a small pair of scissors and a plastic bag for carrying it home.

Many busy days passed before the trail beckoned me back up to the spot where the nest hung. A longtime friend was visiting from Montana, and Joan walked with me that Monday morning. I was delighted to share the picturesque hike—my piece of heaven—with her.

My house lay well below us when I remembered the nest. “Oh, shucks, I meant to bring scissors,” and I told Joan about my little discovery. She lamented that she hadn't brought her camera to capture the beauty of the nearby babbling creek and the surrounding lush greenery. Butterflies with black-etched wings in yellow and orange hues danced with the sunlight across our path, while a bevy of birds trilled their morning songs.

I welcomed the serenity of the scene. Much had happened since my last trek on the trail, and I was still reeling from it all. In a sequence of undeniably God-ordained events, what had seemed impossible had suddenly become possible: I was buying the house I was already living in. While I was grateful not to be moving again, I was truly puzzled why God had opened every door for me to purchase a home.

I reviewed my reservations with Joan. “I have never wanted to be a home owner by myself. Think of all the things that can go wrong. I am going to be really strapped now financially. It's especially scary since my freelance writing and editing income is so sporadic. I don't even have health insurance. And after living in Quincy as a married person, it has been so different—as I knew it would be—to come back. I have virtually no social life, and I didn't think I'd even be staying here. I know God wants me to do this, but humanly speaking it baffles and petrifies me.”

Joan nodded her blond head in understanding, and her blue eyes revealed her compassion and empathy. I knew she was recalling the pain and reality of her divorce years earlier, even though she was now happily remarried.

Just then I realized where we were on the trail, and I lapsed my litany for a moment as we crossed the creek culvert and took a sharp left turn. I quickened my pace. “We’re getting close to where the nest is.” I scanned the large maple leaves as we approached the sapling until my eyes landed on the bird home. I caught my breath, stunned. “Look,” I whispered. “The mama bird is on the nest!” The petite creature sat like a porcelain statue, never blinking an eye nor moving a feather.

Relief wrapped around me as I replayed the evening when I had tried to remove the nest for my collection. Evidently the season for hatching baby birds lasted longer than I had thought. “Oh, I feel terrible! Just think how close I came to destroying her home!”

Low laughter from Joan matched her voice. “You know how the Bible talks about our heavenly Father caring for even the birds? He had her make that nest so sturdy that you couldn’t even loosen it! And then He protected her and her future offspring by keeping you from coming back too soon.”

I shook my head in wonder. Here in the midst of a forest, sequestered in a spindly sapling, a tiny bird’s home hung cradled in the hands of our loving God. So why was I fretting and feeling anxious? After all, wasn’t He the very One who had provided for me a house, this “nest” of my very own? Would He care any less for me, His cherished child?

I envisioned my home, with its apple tree canopy shading the curved walkway to my front door. And then I looked again at the wee bird, nestled in her snug refuge, and I knew my answer. I didn’t need to be afraid.

God’s caring hands were big enough to cradle my nest—and me.

